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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NL](#) [KV](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/KOSOVO: DUTCH RECOGNIZE KOSOVAR
INDEPENDENCE

REF: THE HAGUE 207

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Andrew Schofer for reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

11. (U) SUMMARY: At a press conference with Sweden,s FM Carl Bildt on March 4, FM Maxime Verhagen announced that the Netherlands recognizes Kosovar independence. Poloff reviewed Dutch thinking with Mr. Cees Roels, Head of the Western Balkans Division at the Dutch MFA, on March 4, and also attended a briefing by Bildt at the Clingendael institute in the Hague on March 5. The Dutch are considering participation in the International Steering group, but worry about Serbian intransigence. The Dutch and Swedes, according to Verhagen and Bildt, will continue to advocate a cautious approach to further Kosovo developments grounded in respect for international law. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Dutch media reported the Netherlands, recognition of Kosovo on March 4, after FM Verhagen's press conference with FM Bildt. Shortly after, the MFA issued a press release in Dutch and English. (Note: English version to be emailed to EUR-SCE-KOS. End Note.) The press release stated that "the Netherlands investigated whether the declaration and draft constitution adequately protected human rights. It has concluded that the legislation enacted since (February 17) provides sufficient guarantees for the Serbs and other minorities.... Finally, the Netherlands is pleased with the calm and responsible approach adopted by the Kosovar government." According to Roels, the Dutch parliament will consider the matter of Kosovo recognition during a pre-GAERC briefing on Thursday, March 6. (Note: The parliament does not need to approve recognition. To date, the press has not reported any reaction by parliament to the recognition of Kosovo. End Note.)

13. (C) Asked about the timing and forum for the announcement, Roels told poloff that Sweden and the Netherlands had been in close contact and shared the same analysis of the situation in Kosovo: it was important to pressure Pristina to protect minorities. In addition, the Slovenians were also expected to recognize Kosovo in the next day or two. Few members of the Dutch parliament had spoken out in favor of or against recognition. One media piece by the NGO Pax Christi and criticized the government for a late decision on Kosovo.

14. (C) Roels indicated that the Netherlands would now consider participation in the International Steering Group. Roels expressed interest in how the ISG would function with so many members. The agenda will be key to success. In addition, Roels requested U.S. views on addressing the situation in northern Kosovo. Specifically, it may be difficult for the international community to back up a &hard line8 approach on Serbian actions. UNMIK has low capacity, and UNMIK needs &fresh blood8 to work. The Serbs &can be quite nasty.8 So a more calibrated approach to the Serbs might be most appropriate. Roels also noted debate within

the MFA over when Serbia will get back to business⁸ and resume engagement with the EU. Some predicted it would take a few weeks; others suggested the Serbs, especially those in the south, might never turn toward the EU because they do not benefit.

15. (U) In a March 5 speech to diplomats in the Hague, Sweden's FM Bildt stated that the Dutch and the Swedes share a cautious approach on Kosovo and respect for international law, and agree that the legal regime surrounding Kosovo recognition is not fully clear. Kosovo's independence is "not anchored in anything" because there is no underlying UNSC resolution. Bildt added that Kosovo was unique -- "the first truly new state in Europe in 400 years." Europe needs to accelerate integration of the Balkans because the countries there cannot stand on their own.
Schofer